WE'RE (UN)TRANSLATABLE:

Collective sense-making on Arts Collaboratory Experiences

Arts Collaboratory

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How did we get here?

Arts Collaboratory

Arts Collaboratory is a self-steered and self-organized ecosystem of 25 organizations that are all active on art and social change in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Netherlands. Through a 'Collective Pot' filled with knowledge, art, materials and financial resources, they strengthen each other's programme, organization and ecosystem.

Since 2016 all involved organizations have been collaborating together and building the network, based on a collectively written Future Plan. Through Arts Collaboratory, the involved members not only work on the further strengthening of their work and organizations in their own contexts, but also jointly experiment with new forms of art making, organizing and living together, in order to ultimately bring about social change through radical imagination.

Over the years, many self-evaluations have been carried out. Not only during the annual, in-person Assemblies at one of the members' organizations, but also during smaller gatherings and several Banga's. These self-evaluations have reflected on the profound transformation within certain AC organizations, but also on the involved individuals and ecosystems. But the value of the work of AC has also been shared outside of its ecosystem through the recently published publication 'Forces of Art: Perspectives from a changing world' (November 2020; Valiz): an in-depth qualitative research (initiated by Hivos, the Prince Claus Fund and the European Cultural Foundation) into worldwide best practices in the field of arts/culture and social impact. The intention of this research was to showcase 'how' the transformative forces of arts and culture reveal itself, instead of (again) proving 'if' arts and culture contribute to change. The majority of the involved case studies concern Arts Collaboratory members and several researchers come from ACs ecosystems.

Cyclical Learning

Even though Arts Collaboratory has led to profound transformations, one of its challenges has been to 'tool' the knowledge, learnings and experiences of Arts Collaboratory beyond its network and ecosystems. And next to that, to collectively imagine and create an alternative 'accountability' model that focuses more on learning together in a continuous way.

To approach this challenge, a Cyclical Evaluation Working Group was formed during the PaLebJo Assembly in Jordan in 2018. This working group came together to study and discuss how we can learn within our organizations through the use of dynamical methodologies that are context oriented (instead of standard evaluation systems) and also shareable with others. Maria Scordialos from the Art of Hosting assisted this group by sharing her experience with working with these methodologies.

By the end of 2018, the working group developed a tool called "Cyclical Learning" that was used as part of the AC Lifelines 2018-2020 that were needed to release the last installment of core funds from DOEN. Mainly, the "Cyclical Learning" tool was a way to shift the standard 'summative evaluation system' to a more 'cyclical learning system', understanding that Arts Collaboratory works in a way where things, people and organizations cannot be 'summarized'. The intention with this tool was also to develop a more continuous learning loop together.

Next to that, DOENs Board also made a request for an external evaluation after the first five years of AC's Future Plan with the intention to determine ACs impact and how this way of working also contributed towards more 'healthy' organizations.

From Cyclical Learning towards being stuck

In 2019, after the Uganda Assembly, the Cyclical Learning working group gathered together to reflect on how to continue its cyclical learning mechanism and also to discuss more in depth ways to be accountable to each other, our own ecosystems and funders like DOEN. The group also looked into ways to develop the requested external evaluation by DOENs Board. The intention was to develop an evaluation proposal that would take into account the lived realities of ACs members and their ecosystems, the work of the network itself, and their artistic/social practices, as opposed to more traditional, summative ways to externally evaluate AC. By this time, the working group re-named itself as the AC Evaluation WG.

Since 2019 many meetings were held and people came in and out of the working group. At the end of 2019, the working group shared a first attempt at a possible way to evaluate AC in the TAM TAM. The network was also invited to reflect on this and to radically imagine other ways to evaluate AC as well. Besides that, all members were invited to share input for research questions to focus on in this evaluation. Not much came out of this request.

A few months later the group announced a more worked out proposal in the TAM TAM called "TALES of CHANGE in Art, Money, Collectivity and Life. ARTS COLLABORATORY PARADIGM SHIFTS". The intention was to focus the evaluation on collected stories from events/occasions within the timeline of AC as a whole, but also from individual organizations, as well as from individual persons. Because of the complexity of this approach and the many interlinkages between the different themes, values, stories, etc., the working group was not able to carry on with it.

At this point, the working group reached out to Maria Scordialos to share the many challenges with this process. Based on several meetings, the group invited Maria to assist AC with an evaluation process that was based on cyclical learning methodologies but carried out in a collective, self organized way. However, Maria's proposal for this process was not collectively accepted by the whole network. For some, the proposal seemed to go against many collectively shared AC values, but more importantly, it was felt that the proposal was not aligning well with the funding paradigm shift that AC has at its core.

The experiences during the process in 2020 took the working group to another round of deeper reflections. At a certain moment we collectively felt stuck in the process. To cope with this situation, we organized an open session with some members of the network after a call for help. At this time, Merel and Paula, as the remaining two members of the working group, specifically called for a meeting to share the struggles of the process and to collectively find ways to move forward.

From being stuck towards Translation

The open session led to conversations about the impossibility of AC to translate what the value is of what we are collectively doing together and what this means to ourselves as well as to outsiders of the network. And so the concept of "translation" was borned. By December 2020, new people joined the working group (now consisting of Paula, Merel, Yu-Lan, Ferdi and Nuning) and renamed itself as the Translation Working Group. The renaming was relevant to move away from the framework of "Evaluation" towards "Translation", which entails a very different process: from trying to "determine the value or significance of AC" towards "making what is going on within AC available/understandable to those outside". Also, by this time, DOEN granted Arts Collaboratory EUR 25,000 to carry out this translation project. All these steps made it possible to think about a new way to move forward, and a translation project was borned. At first, we invited three 'storytellers' - who happen to be both friends of AC as well as 'outsiders' to the current AC network: Kabelo Malatsie, Sofía Olascoaga and Serubiri Moses. They were each approached to help us out with translating AC in their own (artistic) way. And a fourth one, Jumana Emil Abboud, was nominated by the network.

From Translation towards Resonating

During 2021, all translators worked on their own projects and by February 2022, we called for an open session with AC to announce the finalization of the projects and to think together how to share them both internally and externally. After this session, the idea of holding "listening sessions" to share each project with AC and collect resonances emerged.

These listening sessions were held on April 20th, 21st, 22nd, 2022. The main goal for these sessions was to learn together from the different translation processes and assess where we were now, what we have learned so far and to unpack where we see the AC Translation process going.
The listening sessions were hosted by Alfonso Diaz and Ravi Shetty, both well experienced narrative practitioners[1] who were interested and enthusiastic about facilitating this process with us. Also, we had a documentation team during these sessions consisting of: Sofía Olascoaga, Andrés Villalobos, Jazael Olguinzapata and Marat Raiymkulov. This publication captures the collectively documented process of the listening sessions.

What happens next

As a working group, it has been an enriching experience. Sometimes we were stuck with frustrations, sometimes uplifted when we had the feeling we were grasping at something in this 'living compost heap' or understanding the 'many headed hydra' that Arts Collaboratory perhaps is. We also concluded that we need more and multiple ways of translating, for example to 'talk' to outsiders, or to funders like DOEN.
All this process, therefore, has been an attempt at translating the (un)translatable. We consider this process not finalized by sharing the following pages, but rather as something open-ended. And we hope that it will stimulate others to keep on searching for a multiplicity of ways of translating. Whatever will come into being in the near future, human and non-human alike, we hope that the following nurtures you to keep on translating the (un)translatable and to keep this process flowing.

Paula, Yu-lan, Merel, Nuning and Ferdi
July 2022

[1] In many ways, stories are similar to living beings: They seem to have their own interests. They compel us to share them and, once told, they begin to grow and change, often becoming longer, stronger and more elaborate. Stories find each other, they intermingle, and multiply. Stories need our attention to thrive in the world; each time we tell or represent them, we help them pollinate other minds. And it seems that we, as storytelling animals, need them even more, for they give structure to our thoughts and lives: they make it possible for us to have memory, to build meaning on the events that we are living, to be able to imagine the future. Stories determine our relationship with time, and they make it possible for us to communicate in elaborate ways with those around us, far across time and space– to what extent, still remains a mystery. Identity is always a multiplicity of stories. Narrative practices are practices in witnessing, asking questions, documenting and linking lives which contribute to foster, nurture and bring forth the stories we need in order for dignity to be a possibility for all. You can see more about the work of the collective Ravi is a part of here: https://www.narrativepracticesindia.com/, you can see more about the work of the collective Alfonso is a part of here: https://www.colectivo.org.mx/

Listening Sessions Resonances

Listening Session #1

Resonances on Serubiri Moses translation project

April 20th, 2022

(See Appendix 1 to know about this translation project)

What follows are some notes of the resonances that came out of this session.



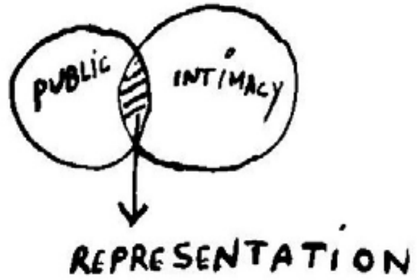
And then we meet and we talk
And of course we have questions
And then there is a relationship that is formed
pre existing relationships, holding network together
The glue of the network
tremendous potential
connection
threatening? your sense of identity
a multi context, multi continental network
languages that one doesn't recognize as one's own

banga
gang up and deepen in the conversation
People visiting each other,
people learning from each other.



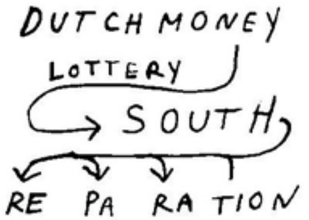
if you don't have the network, you have no tools.

AC and the secrets of the network ----> who possesses this memory?
ongoing public facing knowledge
that doesn't reach "the west"
if it does, is in the form of
metrics, a form that is legible
to those in the west
Secrecy / Memory / Legacy



Dutch audiences do not necessarily have a context for AC.







Restitution
a way of taking back what is (was) stolen
AC taking back continuously





We are interested in stories
-how they shape our lives?
-create the world we inhabit?
-how to change when they don't describe the worlds we need to see?
art cannot be unified
art & culture is different in different colonial histories
it's what makes art, art
Primitive accumulation - How does it affect AC?
AC as an art project in itself
organization as practice



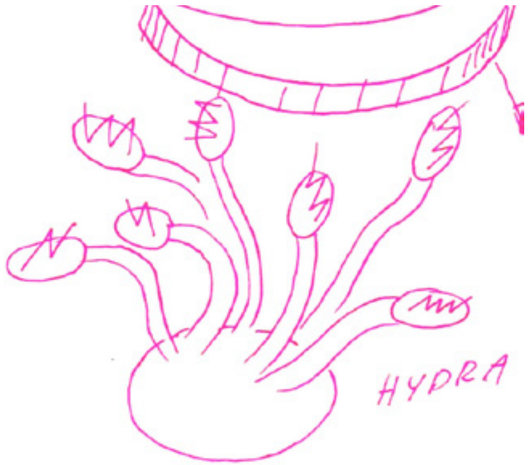
Resting and dreaming
Could be also one way of study



Topology - sedimentation
each layer of memory have their own holders
(not as gatekeepers)



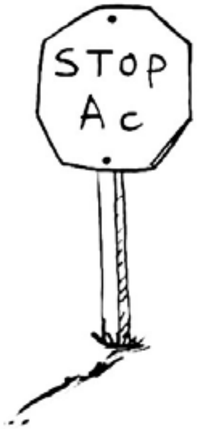
AC is- Many-headed hydra.
a snake

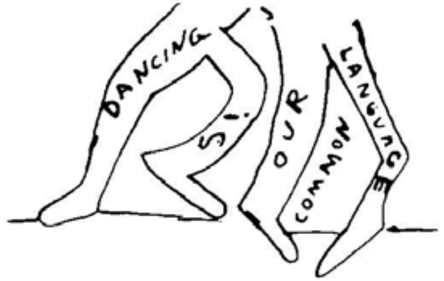


it needs relations
it's about the relations

knowledge sharing comes from relations

A bus stop

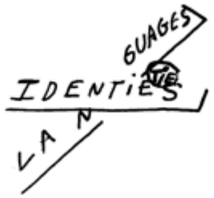




and we meet, and then we dance, and we talk
Se convirtió el viaje de 24 hrs
divertido
interesante
estresante
todos sentados ahí
esperando a que
se resolviera
autobús y carretera









Adversidad y obstáculo nos hizo
sacar nuestro verdadero yo
Lecciones frente a ese momento de adversidad
enojos
risas
Malika se
puso a
cantar una
canción

How difficult it is to work across so many differences
it's Messy
it's frustrating



and yet
We are still here
We still exist

Where of all of these feelings inhabit in our minds
in our secrets
places we shared together



Awake so many memories
that we inhabit in our minds
Invisible territories that we have
me sirve saber
que hay ritmos
que van cambiando
recordar → amuleto
para saber qué son
acelaradísimos
armonicé
experimentales
extraños

How to understand?
How to read AC?

The language, the meaning, the secrets behind it?
there are many languages in AC
language in not strong enough
not clear
too ambiguous
it's not me
it's someone else
it's difficult
but it works
but it's difficult

How do we measure movement differently than big/small?
smooth/hard?
Maybe the measure does not exist yet
"We are making the measure as we are moving"

"Absences"
who is (are) this network
how do I talk about the network without seeing my privileges and people who are there (absent)
quiet but critical voices - I wonder why they are not coming out more

qué tanto esta lógica del fracaso es parte
de lógicas coloniales



frente a quién estamos fracasando
el fracaso puede ser una virtud
de buenos perdedores
qué honroso puede ser perder, también
Tener tiempo para sentarnos a reflexionar
tiempo para despotricar
reflexionar
reír
cantar
ESO DIO TIEMPO
Las relaciones son el pegamento
siento necesidad de visibilizar más
ese pensamiento
AC as a living being, morphing all the time
present / background
it behaves differently
How are they feeling at this moment
I could feel frustration
what are we trying to do here

We are now more of an ecosystem,
not a membership collective ecosystem xxx
no estoy entendiéndolo
todo.
Lo que me cuenta uno, es una historia
Yo construyo otras a partir de los que me
cuentan los secretos.





What is AC ?
Unevenness of
What is
Art and culture
Mean to different
New faces from new places
We all perceive things
Differently
We forget
It's not possible
To perceive
Art equally
I don't think
Art should be
Unified
What makes art art
Is the diversity.
It's very important
To perceive
How different people
Perceive AC
Not having gatekeepers
In AC

WHAT IS AC ?
HYDRA
Old and new
Each layer
Has its own holder
A historian
And a gatekeeper
No one dares
To be a gatekeeper

It needs relationship
To share knowledge
At the bus stop
First we met
Then danced

Then talk
How difficult it is
It is messy

But we are still here
Because of the relationship
Porque el tiempo tiene grietas
Because I see
AC as an
ENABLER
Time has cracks
It was so beautiful for me
I was so happy
When I was listening
To Moses
if I don't connect
I don't listen
It was the multiple voice

What happened in Senegal
Remains in Senegal
We laughed
When I see faces I remember
So many
Moments
Feelings inhabit
In our minds
In our secrets
In our invisible
Territories
The music
The timing of the music
The rhythm
The beats
Moments
Of which the organ
Goes through
Fast
Slow

Pauses
This works for me
This rhythm
What 's AC?
In ENGLISH
It was
The worst situation
An editor's
Can imagine
BUT
We came up
With a sentence
Which is
Now a picture
Of our whatsapp group
Its difficult
But it works.
I think i'm more funny
In Indonesian English

I don't think scale is our friend
But enemy
AC as an act of restorative justice
Taking back
What's been stolen
Actually
Extracted
Because there is a
Rupture
Making dialogues
With various colonized history

What is AC?
A constant
Search of a
Instruction manual
What is AC?
I had a feeling
I found it

And then I didn't
It's a constant
search
A complex never-ending
Pattern
Patterns
It's like
My mother
My sister
And me
Having different experiences
Of the same memory

What is AC?
Trying to find language
To contain AC
The logic of failure
Comes from colonial
We are failing

IN WHOSE EYES

On being a good loser
The pride
Failure as a virtue

WHAT IS AC?

A living organism
Morphing
Moving around
Some images are present
Some in the background
Depending on time and space
Depend on energies
Of the members
Ecosystem
And not
Membership collective

Listening Sessions Resonances

Listening Session #2

Resonances on Jumana Emil Abboud translation project

April 21th, 2022

(See Appendix 2 to know about this translation project)

What follows are some notes of the resonances that came out of this session.

Folktales & Storytelling
real / mythical

Who is the we?

A movement

Chapter 1: where there is a mountain and we must move it
the mountain itself that decided to move itself
A 100 year old process



Sphere of strength/ SHE
magnify the circle of imaginaries and visionaries

> Chinampa: dissemination is a matter of life and death
eat from the handgrown chillies (handgrown)

> the spell of remembering

> talk to the earth
recollect and cultivate local seeds

(astronomy of nouns)

They needed each other, nothing else
Restore: move the mountain back to its territories (family)

>TEQUIO Feed the earth, the wind

Compartimos cómo estamos atravesados y nos
permeamos mutuamente por los territorios
los sueños, la tierra que caminamos, la forma que
habitamos
lo habitan muchas realidades
existencias simultánea de la utopía y la distopía
hay mucho violentado, y muchas cosas maravillosas
sucediendo. Me emociona compartirlas ambas.

- Sometimes I'm in the group
Sometimes I'm in the imagination

Como estar entre un sueño y la realidad.

Somos la montaña?

Anoche le volví a escuchar antes de dormir

movemos la montaña?

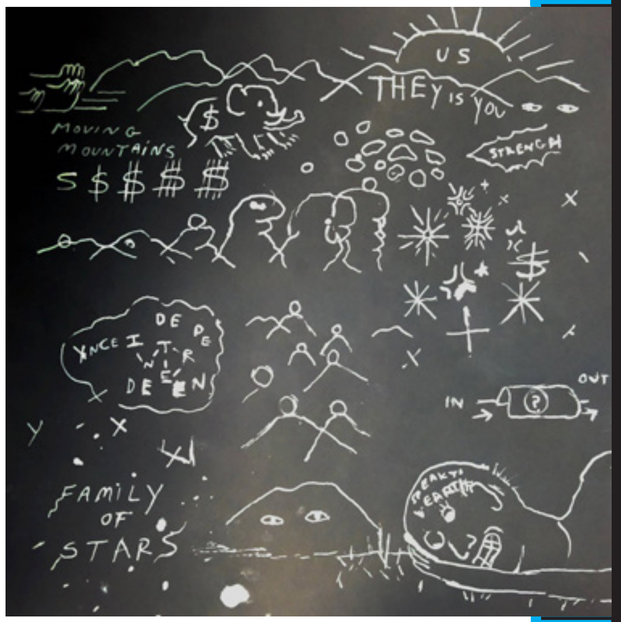
La capacidad de imaginar posibilidades

seres ajenos la pusieron aquí?

Me transportó a ese lugar "imagination is ones defense"

asumimos que hay una FICCIÓN OPERATIVA: en el sentido
de imaginarse algo, una posibilidad, vivirla como si fuera
una realidad.

le queremos tener?



Tener un norte e imaginarse ese territorio

la trajimos? o no?

Juntar esas geografías en la red.

la queremos quitar?

No queremos ser un concepto anquilosado, sino vivir.
Lo que uno siempre se está imaginando.

all text sound like a feeling

These words we play with
the value
affinity, care, self care, horizontalizing, solidarity

I like it is "PLAYING"

It is difficult for me to say it.
TIME OPENS UP MORE PERSPECTIVE
reminded of the tea ceremony in Kyrgyzstan.
I love it.
I didn't understand it deeply, but I feel its deep potential and very nice forms of being together.

Feo o extraño: siento dificultad de escuchar

Sometimes it's non linear, more levels of reflection about our situation.

No tomarse tan en serio. la unx o lxs otrxs
Buscar otras metáforas que me funcionen
metaphors can be understood in different ways
Not to take it all so serious
¿Cómo zafarse de estos protocolos?
Dónde están las otras metáforas, otro tipo de metáforas moviéndose a otros niveles

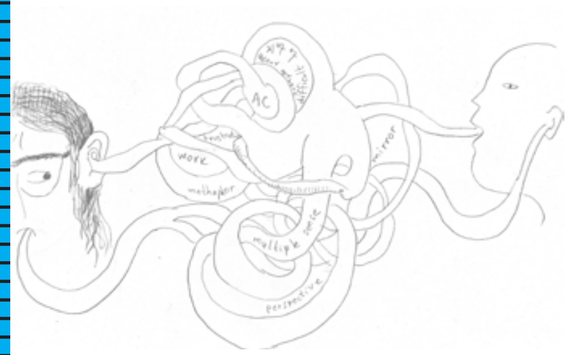
unlearning in everyday practice

¿Cómo hacer metáforas de las relaciones de poder entre funders/fundees?
pedir, rogar, exigir, demandar, convencer

through metaphors we can find new relations with each other

¿Qué pasa con el silencio, el no-cuidado, la no participación de la red?

utopian, mythical,can be beautiful, frustration, misunderstanding



This is as radical as I can be today

We are in ≠ places at the same time

La montaña me sirve para entender los distintos momentos de cada une en la red
Arriba, abajo, desde adentro, caída en un cráter
Desglosar y seguir abriendo esta metáfora en otras

interest in borderlands
a space that has possibilities sometimes for meanings that can be transformative

What are the languages to name this that have not yet existed?

inside out of the mountain, hold on to this metaphor and think about it a bit longer
how do we navigate?
what kind of maps are there to navigate this?
what's not being spoken?
How do we approach the inside out?
navigating what's hard to speak about: frustration, pain
There might be maps that you already have?

we can make relationship very interesting

¿Cómo podemos mover una montaña?
La asamblea de AC como un encuentro de culturas



Stories bring image of snakes
histories as snakes
come from the mouth and wonder around from one person to another
to think with the specifics of stories

to explain the specifics of INTERDEPENDENCE
collective pot is the specifics of interdependence

I am not yet willing to give up metaphors: not drawing them for themselves but for external eyes, for the one who doesn't know it yet

what are the new metaphors?

that can draw people into the inside of the mountain

who are the believers and the unbelievers?

*sometimes we are too close to see what's going on

possibility of art as translation?
mirror what we are doing, on what's working and what's not

How can a bus or mountain be worn out? Is it our own gaze that is worn out?

how to create a map in which we are still in it?

The elephant in the room MONEY



HOW WE APPROACH THE MOUNTAIN ?

I was very excited
The images
The mountains
How we move it
How can we think
Of other ways
Of transmitting
Other organizations
Who are also
Dealing with
The mountains

It was like
A bedtime story
Took me to
A realm
Where
'Imagination is our defense'
As a possibility
Even if it is
Not a reality
To imagine
\a whole territory

We can make
It rock
Walk
Around it
Looking at different
Parts of them
Of all this geography
Is this operative fiction
That's moving us?

Very nice text
Very inspiring
Very lyrical
Relate to myself
The mountains
The lake in kyrgyzstan
Everyday we see it
It will be nice
To feel it
I like it
I love it
The cilantro
I don't understand

But we use it
In our food
Not very often
It taste very nice

I remember
Hama
And his ceremony
And
I love
Ceremony
I don't understand
It deeply
But I feel it.

I love
That the image
Was open
For interpretation
Mountains
Something can jump
Around
Sometimes
Its
A problem
A consequence
A playful spirit
Who moved the mom tain
Is it a tension or
All collective work
Of the collab
Or that of
The bus trip.

How can we talk
About dissent
In a space
Like this?
It's hard
For me
To relate to these metaphors
So i'm in
Search of
Other metaphors
A quest
Of metaphors
Between
Fundee and Funders
How do we

Speak
Of all that is
Not spoken
A everyday practice
Of how to nurture
The pain and frustration
of what's not there

Inside out of the mountain
A deep look
Maybe what's radical
For someone

May not be radical

For me
How radical can I be
TODAY?

How can we move a mountain ?
It's a lot to ask
From people
A difficult thing to do
Its encounters of cultures
Are we causing a natural disaster ?

I feel we are more gathered
It is us
Who are moving the mountain
It is us
Who are riding the bus
Who is able to take a nap?
Who is thinking about the gas?
Who is left out of the bus ?
How is laughed at?
Who is not?
What else can we know about?
How do we work with now?

What reality is informing the metaphor
Who is moving the mountain?

Listening Sessions Resonances

Listening Session #3

Resonances on Kabelo Malatsie translation project

April 22th, 2022

(See Appendix 3 to know about this translation project)

What follows are some notes of the resonances that came out of this session.

a commitment in listening
work with the sounds
Based on what I could find. I worked with what was there,
I listened to hours of audio
Gave it to him
And then his listening went beyond what i gave him
He included his own sounds
His interpretation of the whole
It also includes his work
We work with cacophony
Even in what seems to be a silence there is a lot going on
Spanish sounds are not translated. It was important for me.
I enjoyed laughter
There is so much laughter at AC
Things I enjoy, joy, familiarity, and care.
Aspects I wanted to include.

Contexts
the cicadas
the bats
the rains
-Situations that are complex
not everything being organized.

-The things that I enjoy, and found productive about solidarity, kind of care, questioning things.
This is my first sonic essay.
-I hope emotions come through.
AC is a very emotional space
Coltrane as an embodied theorist
We're looking at Volcanoes
When they are born, they have frequencies that travel around when they erupt they are frequencies.
We can't even hear these frequencies but they exist.
-Questions I don't have answers yet.

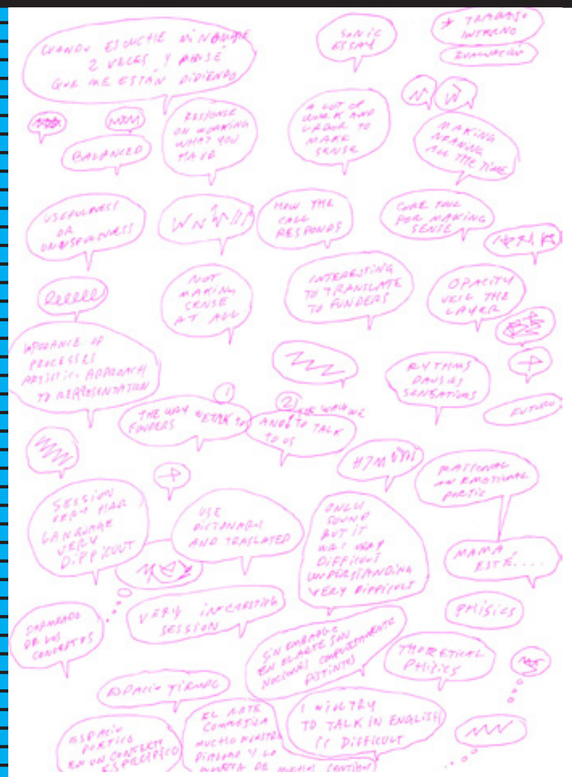


For people who don't know AC
How can they resonate?
I wonder, if it's making sense to people outside AC, what are they picking up?

Los sonidos traen mucha información
Complejidad, encuentros, risas
El recuerdo de lo que pasa entre una cosa y otra, el "in between"
Las reuniones (en asamblea) tienen un objetivo, y todo lo que pasa en el medio esta parte tan deliciosa, cuando algo no es tan útil. Nos recuerda algo placentero.
Ruidos. Sensaciones de recuerdos porque he estado ahí también.

A todas las personas que hemos estado en procesos colectivos, este ruidito, esta bulla, togetherness
cómo estar juntas
muy vulnerable
Dando todo en todo sentido
Diferentes maneras de habitar de crear
nuestras voces, ritmos, tonos, pausas, sensaciones cuando es una propia voz, es extraño, es raro.
pero es bello también.
Como si nos estuviera visitando el fantasma del futuro
lo agradezco mucho.

es una pieza de arte
estaba entrando y saliendo
me llega mucho y representa lo que es AC
¿Cómo lo ve la otra gente?
¿Se alcanza a percibir? No hay explicaciones
inmersión total ejercicio de escucha que todos necesitamos tener
multiplicidad de voces
aunque se habla en inglés, entonaciones
comprometido con la imaginación, visualizar momentos de encuentro, de estar juntas
proceso de la memoria que tiene muchas imágenes, palimpsesto de voces que están ahí
el olor de los espacios
el tiempo que pasa
an art piece
Para mí representa a AC y esa complejidad que no podemos expresar en unas frases.



documentación abstracta, una carta al futuro se puede digerir con más tiempo , a la distancia
por sí mismas son una experiencia estética, sonora
un chorro de rumores.
AC son muchos secretos que se dicen de voz en voz, de a poquito
un ejercicio de rumores?
donors can understand us.
The way we represent ourselves.
or the way we use art as a tool for imagination.
Do funders embrace chaos?

Recipes, importance of food and cooking
secrets that travel from persons
works of memory

sensation of in betweenness…
what listening implies
pauses, rhythms, sensations

Cuando empecé a estudiar física estaba interesado en las nociones de espacio/tiempo por parte de la física
En el arte son espacios y nociones completamente diferentes, los mismos de hacer particular en relación a los contextos que habitamos y las representaciones de quienes lo miran en el arte.
Colaboración con cráter invertido con el cómic, espacio poético, recontextualizado y pasarlo por nuestro contexto.
No son meramente datos.
Complejiza el diálogo y lo llena de otros sentidos.
contextos/conceptos que se empalman pueden ser vividos en diferentes espacios.
jugamos con los sentidos y las palabras de los principios éticos.
se vuelven vivas otra vez estas historias…

Nudos, historias, están atados de diferentes maneras
trenzados tratando de resolver como organizaciones
cómo estar juntos
la propia red haciendo nuestra propia evaluación
estamos involucrados
nuestra responsabilidad , no se puede delegar
terrorista- aplasta distancia entre ficción y realidad.
novelista- estira distancia entre ficción y realidad

try to knit together
It reminded me of my father, who lived on a small Canarian island. physics math also a musician and a bass player. On the island, he created this software. He is recording sounds in the island "la tierra che sogna", the land that makes sounds, walking with shepherds, in the ground. the land that makes sound.

AC members put their ears to the ground, connect with others. Close eyes, listen to what we're hearing, our hearing is polluted, we hear so much we live in cities. Listen to what we are doing.

The contradictions we are hearing can take our questions further
Also the things we are not hearing



How do we become a different person after listening to Kabelo's translations?
What difference does it bring?
How is AC changed or moved?

The slowness of things, the trivial things, the small things.
Hurdles
Listening to the work helps me put things in that particular perspective.
Turning the gaze inside-out
To try not to be overwhelmed by the structure of violence happening around
Big things should be taken slightly. Small things should be taken importantly.

Slowness has been present at our organization. We reopened three weeks ago, in the appropriate space and not pressured.
Small things go slow

People listening to themselves was the call
In Between
Another reference.
Lab as outside: all around, OUTSIDE
Study: to listen closely to a cacophonous space of study. It is not hygienic.
Understand where I come from. Study is done in the open in the fullness of life. Not in isolation.
It is another way of knowing.
Textures.
There is a lot of texture in AC



Translation is complex for AC, because of languages, contexts, social, economical, political issues
A space that encompasses quite a lot, it seems disingenuous to make it intelligible
Not a translation for the funder, but to AC to hear itself.
How do you listen to people and moments that were/are not heard?

A moment for AC to listen to AC



When I hear
Your piece
I remember
Many things
But
How do we
Tell others
Outside AC

WHAT IS AC ?

Your work
Brings forward
A sensation
Memory
An in-between space
This is when
The laughter
The giggles
'Of being there'
Think of togetherness

WHAT IS ARTS COLLABORATORY ?

Multiplicity of voices
It makes
Us want
Feel a lot of things
Experience
Memories
And remembrance
The Sally
That was speaking
Is not the
SALLY anymore

It's a letter
To the future
An escape
From the
Literal
Allows more time
To be digested
In my own terms
Internal problems
Of AC
A lingering feeling
A coherent feeling
Of AC
It allows
To understand AC
On my own terms

Opacity
Veil the layer
Artistic approach
Rather
Than the
Rational
The way we speak
To funders
The way we represent
Ourselves
Our art as tools.

Do funders
Embrace chaos

When its
Not fully legible
It brings back
Stories to life
To be able
To listen
To oneself
It helped me
Let go
The idea of making sense
It made me feel
Knots in myself
Of all the stories

Knotted in me
It reminds me
Of my father

Recording
The land
That make the sound
Its like all AC Members
Putting their ears
To the ground
To listen to each other
I hope this sound
Travels far
Of what we are hearing
And what we are
not.

The slowness
Of things
The silences
The non-responsiveness
Slowness
As a value
Because we can
Listen more

It is a
Learning moment
Trivial
Slow
The big picture
Turning the gaze
Inside out
We have been
Talking
About it
For four years

Where do we find
People like that
Big things have to be
Taken
Like nothings
Small things
Go slow
Not the formal
But the
In-between.

Appendix 1

Arts Collaboratory Oral History

Translation project by Serubiri Moses

The following oral history departs from the trajectory of Arts Collaboratory aiming to flesh out the details of its life history. Accounts of Teesa Bahana (of 32 East, Ugandan Arts Trust), Marie Helene Pereira (of Raw Material Company), Stefano Harney (of the 2016 AC workshop at CASCO in Utrecht), Jason Waite (of formerly CASCO), and Farid Rakun (of Ruangrupa).

Serubiri Moses is currently Adj. Asst. Professor in Art History at Hunter College, and visiting professor at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. He has delivered lectures at Williams College, Yale University, University of Pittsburgh, and The New School. He has also lectured at the basis voor aktuelle kunst. As a curator, he has organized exhibitions at museums including MoMA PS1, Long Island City; Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and the Hessel Museum, Bard College, NY. He previously held a research fellowship at the University of Bayreuth, and received his MA in Curatorial Studies at Bard College.

Introduction:

The topic of "study" or "education" is the starting point for this oral history, because as the primary purpose statement for Arts Collaboratory circa 2007 says, the network was established as a way to foster a process of knowledge-sharing across disparate, or seemingly incongruent geographies. Because this process of creating an oral history necessitates both a methodology and interviewees, this oral history ultimately has its biases and shortcomings. In short, it is neither objective, nor purely scientific. For example, some of the geographies in AC are not represented here, including Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. I will proceed by giving a short account of my methodology below.

A primary aspect of my methodology was to use the constituent politics and philosophy of orality: that is, to follow the philosophical perspective outlined by authors such as Okot pa Bitek (born 1931, Uganda; died 1982, Uganda), Micere Mugo (born 1942, Kenya), Austin Bukenya (born 1944, Uganda), and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (born 1938, Kenya). While I will not delve into a literature review of said authors, it is crucial to summarize some of their ideas here: (1) education via orality: all the authors have written about the process through which oral tradition in the African context functions as a means of education, that is, the primary means by which knowledge is exchanged from person to person. (2) ethics via orality: all the authors show that orality is not merely a passive tool for transmission of data. Rather, they emphasize that a clear ethical stance is involved when it comes to oral traditions, and such ethics are illustrated by ideas of morality, virtue, and character. (3) aesthetics via orality: all the authors agree that aesthetics is one of the primary domains of orality, such that storytelling and narration take a central role within oral traditions.

These methods are used in the specific oral histories excerpted below. I will provide an overview and expand on some of the core ideas. In Marie Helene Pereira's oral history account, she shares a crucial aspect of ethics that I understand as a governing principle for the network. Not only does Pereira cite the AC Future Plan and its "ethical principles" among which is to think horizontally and to dismantle hierarchical structures of power, her account also gives an example of such ethics at work. "I really believe (we) could change a lot when it comes to removing hierarchical structures in institutions, even though as you know one person has to take responsibility for a lot of things, for me it was important that even though we talk about RAW as a whole, we also need to know that within RAW are individuals, who have specific skills, who have specific visions, who have specific motivations, and who as a whole make the institution, no?" It is clear that "taking responsibility" is an ethic, as is the multiplicity of "specific skills" and "specific visions." Ultimately, a practice of taking initiative and responsibility is combined with respect for the other, as indeed the acknowledgement of multiplicity of positions, as well as multiplicity of knowledge. In this sense, what makes the "whole" is determined by these varying positions rather than any superior claim or directive.

While Pereira's account provides the ethics in a collective, Jason Waite's account provides the politics of the collective. Following a classic Marxist epistemology, Waite considers the material conditions that shaped the AC network. His account considers the aesthetics of such a collective as contingent upon such capital reserves in the West. Thus, what might a critique of the specific political economy of AC (of being founded by a private foundation) contribute to the understanding of artistic practices in the Global South? Waite says, thus "it is important to acknowledge that a horizontal global south organisation was brought together and funded by a Dutch lottery." In a further reflection he considers the limitations of such an arrangement specifically when it comes to what we have come to understand as "contemporary art." That is, his account challenges what might be legible as 'contemporary' or as 'art' in the North vs. the South, as well as challenges what it means for the Netherlands to be the "center of culture." His account reveals the ongoing widening of such a notion of contemporary art, when he exposes the ways in which some are "limited in their knowledge of what this problematic form of "contemporary art" is or should be."

Ultimately the question of education is brought to bear within Stefano Harney's account. One of the points that I learned from another source was that there was an attempt to use Dutch state funding in the early 2000s, with organisations like Rijksakademie and ruangrupa, and Centre Soleil d'Afrique, to align with an "international art" and/or "non-Western art" as well as to think about "solidarity" in the broadest terms possible. As Waite's account shows, it is unlikely that such a financial arrangement isn't already co-opted into the political economy of the Dutch state or Dutch private foundation and its relationship to said "other" artists, alternative spaces, and collectives across the globe. Therefore, Harney allows us to witness both the struggle of AC organisations to maintain autonomy in their cultural and artistic positionality, while at the same time being "accountable" or in other words being "corrected" by the Dutch founder and/or sponsor or financer. He said of his methodology when brought to lead an AC workshop in Utrecht in 2016: "So we took seriously the idea of Immeasure as a form of organising that didn't fall back on measurement; didn't fall back on notions of efficiency. Didn't fall back on standard ideas of work organisation, but instead was allowed to continue to experiment, to continue to undo itself as much as to build itself so that people felt free to feel that the organisation was in some sort of ongoing relationship with the social movement."

In conclusion, and contra Harney, it is accurate to say that specific ideas of measurement and accountability cannot be avoided, for example in the daily running of arts organisations, yet we could suggest following Harney that it is crucial to acknowledge the stark failures. One example that I have pointed out is the sort of insider-outsider politics of AC that means that only AC members can access any information about the collective from the inside, while the outsiders cannot know anything about it. This is on the one hand, and on the other hand, as Teesa Bahana's account shows, such blindspots are also failures to know the "other" within the collective itself. Given that communication streams and break-downs are contingent on culturally-specific knowledge including language, protocols, and cultural attitudes, one of the biggest failures is that which takes place intranetwork. Thus, in lieu of Harney's statement that we fail a lot, how can members of the collective access critical attitudes that challenge such forms of complacency when it comes to knowing the "other" intranetwork?

TEESA BAHANA

In Teesa's account, excerpted here, two important perspectives emerge. One of them – "Are they hurdles?" – is a reflection on the Arts Coll. motivation statement concerning exchange and disparate geographies of the Global South and reveals the constantly changing ethos, differences, and dynamic within it. The second on "a relationship that's formed" reflects how that dynamism is dependent on (1) the individual, and (2) interpersonal relationships, and further, dependent on (3) the larger infrastructure (or ecosystem), which Teesa calls as "the core essence of the network." Her account ties all three together.

I. There's a relationship that's formed

TB: I mean, my (take on) a lot of these issues, "whether or not things work" or, "what's being communicated" is – either you jump in and try and make things clearer for you – If I am not clear on something, then I will try and find out what the issue is, or see how we can improve it, or why it is that that has been in existence and maybe it doesn't work so well – but it is actually better than what was there before. **Because, otherwise, I think being in AC has just kind of made me very aware of how difficult it can be to work across so many differences. So many differences – all of these different complexities and layers.** And that it is not going to be easy; and it is going to be messy; and communication is going to be really difficult.

Even if you spoke the same first language, communication is going to be really difficult. But we don't speak the same first language. We aren't even in the same time zones. (We have) cultural differences that we don't even know, and can't even name because we don't even realise that there are differences. All of those things and then just add all of the additional layers that come from – you know – different income levels, or different races, or different gender identities, all of these things, right? It is going to be messy. So sometimes people get really frustrated with it. But it is a miracle that it is still in existence, and this many people are still talking to each other, and want things to work beyond the first few **years of annoyance and frustration**. That is just my take on it.

In terms of knowledge sharing, I think most of it comes from relationships as well.

The assemblies have historically been quite difficult, because, sometimes, I think it is just work for work's sake. Like **"what is it that we're actually trying to do here" – "are we having a session on this particular working group" – without saying, "okay, like, really what is the point? What are we trying to resolve? What decisions are we trying to make?"** And I think it has taken us a while to get there. So in a lot of the assemblies it has been very inward looking but I think the knowledge sharing often comes from the different relationships you have with different people – you know – getting to know what their programs are; what their contexts are; then you have a place to start to ask them more questions, or you know that you can send them an email, and say, "Hey can we jump on this WhatsApp call?" "I'm going to be in your city for this other work thing." "I'm going to be around and come by."

"I've always wanted to learn about your program," or "we are thinking about doing this program, and I know you did something similar, can you maybe share some of your material on that, or talk about what worked and what did not work." And I don't think a lot of that would happen if it weren't for the very concentrated time that you have together during an assembly or during a Banga. **Because when I think about other networks that I am in – I don't call up a lot of people, or send emails to people in those networks**, unless I've met them in other circumstances, like you know, or have needed to (it would stay the same). So, for example, with Triangle (Network), I know the Triangle New York and Gasworks. BagFactory a little. But I haven't met the new director, so again, I haven't met her. But with Triangle New York, for example, we had wanted to have an event in New York, and I knew that **"Oh Triangle, we have a connection there, let me reach out to them." And then we meet and then we talk and of course we have questions and then there's a relationship that's formed.**[2] But if it is just a dry email to someone, you know, it is not - even now like sometimes I'll get people emailing and saying "Yeah, can we chat about this?" "I don't want (to)." You know? Right? It is almost as though, yeah, that your time and energy is kind of limited; and when there's a relationship there it doesn't feel hard. So when I think about the knowledge sharing in terms of those kinds of structures, that's how it has worked for me.

II. Are they hurdles?

TB: I mean I think it's part of the work. **Are they hurdles, or are they part of the core essence of what this network is?** The whole idea behind – or the way I see it – a big part of what the network is is connections between places where there have been barriers, or these things that have been seen as hurdles. But because they are seen as that, they are kind of limiting people's ability to see the tremendous potential of connection, because they are like "Oh I don't know anyone in South America." Or the flight routes are far. Or they don't speak Spanish. Or they are not in the same time zone.

But then – in the same network – you get to see like, **"Wow! I had no idea the things we had in common. I had no idea what the geopolitical context (is there) that gives me a different perspective on what's going on here."** Or these very global structural issues that are causing damage in very different ways. So instead of, again, seeing it as, "Oh this is just a problem we are dealing with in Uganda" you actually realise that "okay, these forces are a lot more global in nature" and you know – that then means that the solutions are global in nature too. If you again don't view these as hurdles, they might make things a little slower. But the fact that they have been viewed as limitations **has kept so many movements from happening in a more impactful way.**

JASON WAITE

Jason's account provides an insightful question: Is Arts Coll.'s redistribution of Dutch lottery money to the Global South a kind of reparative justice? This raises attention to the North-South dichotomy and the settler-native binary. Admittedly, Stefano Harney deals with this too in his account. Perhaps Jason suggests that by "contributing to nourishing a very different form of cultural production that is not dependent on the Netherlands as a center for culture" Arts Coll. manages this delicate balance, and thus succeeds at its reparative praxis.

1. Only as a reparative form of providing a certain form of substance

Serubiri Moses: This is not something that's outside of your research. Like you were studying models and practices that were organisational, political, and aesthetic as well. So this idea of art and politics was always part of what you were thinking about.

Jason Waite: I think that's a great open leading question, and a great trail off, because, honestly, Arts Collaboratory, was that in so many ways and more. And to a degree that it is still difficult to comprehend, and certainly under acknowledged. I am not putting together any major points here, but what I want to say is that it is just shocking how at least **in a certain**

[2] I think this can be understood to be in dialogue with the sort of individual model and the interpersonal models that Teesa gives in her account. In consultation with the Arts Coll. Future Plan (2016), reference is made to "micropolitics" and "care". "Care" also appears under "Self-care", "Self-sustainability", and "Self-study" which tends to center the personal. However, it is important to reflect that Teesa's account aims at both this individual model, and the interpersonal that necessitates sharing "micropolitics" and sharing "care", before coming towards the larger and final infrastructure of connection in the network, which is the ecosystem.

period Arts Collaboratory was able to enact and pre-figure what we hope certain forms could be. However, certain forms that are contingent on capital reserves, right? That's always been an issue. It is important to acknowledge that a horizontal global south organisation was brought together and funded by a Dutch lottery. At least in the US, lotteries are generally a tax on the poor as the odds of winning are so low and the funds go to local schools or neighbourhoods. However in the case of this Dutch lottery they fund local programs but also all of these different arts organisations in the global south **– is that just another form of reparations?** It could be an interesting way of thinking about the lottery that perhaps unbeknownst to much of the Dutch public or lotto players – their game play is slowly transferring one Euro at a time of well overdue **contributions to nourishing a very different form of cultural production that itself is not dependent on the Netherlands as a center for culture. Thus this reparative form is only providing a certain form of sustenance.**

2. The unevenness of what art and culture means in each place

Jason Waite: Yes, you bring up so much there in your comment that is valuable and that also highlights the gaps. There are gaps in between organisations in a whole host of ways, and then there are also gaps in the organisations themselves. For example, a difference in what each organisation wants to do. How they can go about doing these programs, and then even unintentionally stumble upon doing things that are interesting, unintendedly. This difference is, perhaps, because of the unevenness. And by unevenness I really just mean **the unevenness of what art and culture means in each place.**

These are part of the gaps. It is difficult to understand: what do we mean by art and culture? How do we understand that the notion of contemporary art is a deeply racist, and colonial notion? How to thus understand the tension of "what contemporary art is," against "how culture should be," **and how (or is it necessary) to show things which are legible within that sphere, or how also to create a context in which therefore can be intelligible to audiences, which might be limited in their knowledge of what this problematic form of "contemporary art" is or should be, or what culture is and should be elsewhere.**

Therefore it is critical to highlight that the notion of art and culture is completely diverse. Despite these different ways of producing culture, the organisations put together applications and were accepted into AC. At the beginning of Arts Collaboratory there was a fundamental underlying difference and **an acknowledgement of the difference of what art and culture is in our respective areas** and how we choose to operate and a mutual respect for that difference. I think what you were alluding to in discussing the Arts Collaboratory Assembly is opening up a space for an ongoing exchange – even if in that space there is even a different basic form of understanding what one is doing there. Thus **how one is bringing forward a kind of culture and language and a discourse** around that notion of difference even within that space of the Assembly is important.

3. Restorative justice / Ex-appropriation

Jason Waite: I think there are two points. First, **around the notion of restorative justice, is AC intentionally reparative in a way?** And then secondarily, **does AC need invisibility?** To address the first point I'm not sure how exactly the founding director Gertrude framed it inside the organisations of DOEN and Hivos. If even the project had certain aspects of NGO-thinking that we have seen before, what became evident in the process of creating its second(?) phase around 2015 is that Gertrude was able to act as buffer between DOEN and AC that **ultimately allowed space for the organisations to have agency over their own funding and collectively decide how to distribute it amongst themselves.** This is an intensely radical action and I am frankly surprised that this isn't more known or discussed more in the art world. That perhaps raises the question of invisibility and whether this invisibility is a constitutive part of AC that allows for this type of radical experimentation.

This invisibility could also be due to the fact that **there is a real ex-appropriation that's going on.** The fact that DOEN is funded by the lottery and the lottery can be perceived as a tax on the working class or those who play in the Netherlands. This raises a funny point that if the lottery was marketed as a direct transference of funds from Dutch citizens to global south arts organisations as a form of reparations would they still buy these tickets?

STEFANO HARNEY

Stefano's account details a 2016 workshop he co-led, organised by Arts Coll. and CASCO in Utrecht which followed the Assembly in Dakar of 2015. While admittedly, Stefano found that "we did not think we were particularly useful", the members of Arts Coll. came together and developed a radical new form for the network (Bangas, for example) – using some of the tools Harney had offered. I can only speculate that the disjuncture was related to the methods developed in Immeasure (co-founded with Emma Dowling) built to give "small social movement type organisations" a place to think and talk about their work. The workshop emphasised "co-research".

I. Immeasure

Stefano Harney: It started with both Emma (Dowling)[3] and I, when we were teaching in business schools, and neither of us were business school scholars. She's a sociologist and I am somewhere in the Humanities. But we discovered that we had a certain kind of authority because we were coming from business schools, so one part of what we did as Immeasure, was that we allied ourselves. **We came together with social movement organisations who wanted to be able to say to funders, "Look, we've met with consultants around our organisational structure, around our governance, and around accountability etc." But those organisations didn't want to conform to a corporate model of NGO-isation or whatever word you would use.**

So with Emma and me they were able to say, "Look, these two Business school experts came in. They said we were doing a great job in the form that we're doing it." Which is usually flat or more democratic. **Less part of that kind of NGO industrial complex.** And so we were able to play and use the function in that sense. **But at the same time we were also serious about the conversations and the work, so when we did meet with groups, what we discovered is that they really did need some time and some space to think about their work. And many of these smaller social movement type organisations were deeply dedicated, and deeply embedded in struggles to the point where we really had time to sit back and think.** So in a way, a couple of days with Immeasure were a kind of break for them to be able to reflect on their own work. We didn't steer, or direct it very strongly at all. We (Immeasure) just became the opportunity for them to take a short break. And so for instance, when we were working with a group of migrant activists from Northern Italy, you know, they said to us quite frankly, **"Look, this is the first time we've talked about our own work, and it's been really useful."**

We also had what we felt was a serious purpose in **encouraging an organisation to be able to think about itself outside of the framework of what has now come to be called the NGO industrial complex,** in which every NGO has to have a board of governors who is in certain sets of financial protocols et cetera. But more than anything else, they end up being workplaces like any other workplaces, with a manager, with job accountability et cetera, which limits the experiments that can take place in an organisation and which often puts the organisation at odds with the very movement that it's part of. At odds with the very struggle that it's part of. **So we took seriously the idea of Immeasure as a form of organising that didn't fall back on measurement; didn't fall back on notions of efficiency.** Didn't fall back on standard ideas of work organisation, but instead was allowed to continue to experiment, to continue to undo itself as much as to build itself so that people felt free to feel that the organisation was in some sort of ongoing relationship with the social movement, ongoing relationship with the struggle, rather than standing apart. Rather than becoming a professional organisation. If you see what I mean.

So to the extent that we had time, and the extent that we could fund it (cause we never charged of course for anything that we did or said) we tried to undertake as many as we could. Then Emma and I ended up in different parts of the world, myself in Singapore and her in Germany, and we held fast to the idea of continuing Immeasure, but it basically couldn't operate. We just didn't have the money, or the ability to do it at the time to come together. **And it's just at that point that we got the invitation for Arts Collaboratory.**[4]

[3] Emma Dowling, a professor at the University of Vienna.
[4] The workshop led by Stefano Harney was hosted in Utrecht (2016). It was during this workshop's breakout sessions that many have noted another form of the network emerged, particularly in regard to shaping the Future Plan.

Emma was still working with some anti-globalisation groups in London at that time, but mostly had to slow down because of what was happening to us personally. So Arts Collaboratory came at a good time. Unfortunately in the event Emma couldn't be a part of it, but still allowed us to continue Immeasure's work. **So you know, it holds a special place for me that we did those few days, because it allowed me to dream that Immeasure could continue.**

2. Co-research

I know we're foreshadowing a bit, but just to say a word about aspects of study and what we do in the room and method, and things like that. **There was a lot in the idea of Immeasure,** probably more than could fit. So there were certainly things **like the idea of co-research** which we were taking from the Italian workers movement, and the idea that the people that you are working with should be researchers. They shouldn't be people who are subjected to research.

So you know, we'd have exercises like that that we would operate. But we also had this side of study, where intentionally something was going to be left incomplete. Intentionally something was going to be left ongoing, and to a certain extent not capable of being evaluated as valuable under a traditional set of values, if that's not a bit of a silly sentence. So some of that morphed into something Tonika[5] and I started after Immeasure, because partly, I was having trouble keeping Immeasure going, and partly we saw there was this whole other side of study that needed to be developed within organisations and that is what became organisation **Ground Provisions.** I don't know if you ever had a chance to see a little piece we wrote in the journal Afterall[6], but it basically tries to lay out what we were trying to do with Ground Provisions, and it picks up in a sense on one side of Immeasure.

Only in so far as I feel like it shows you a little bit about one direction that we went afterwards; a lot of those ideas were there in Immeasure, and they were there in the work that Tonika was already doing, in autonomous schools, and autonomous learning spaces. So that's one side. And then the other side, which, I hope will revise itself, is the side where we are really in a room conducting exercises and trying to do it in such a way that we don't succumb to the standard values, of a certain kind of capitalist and patriarchal notion of what success is, or what an organisation should be et cetera. It's hard because it is so embedded in us. **So we fail a lot.**

But you know, that's the aim, and the people we work with know that's the aim, **and that's one of the lovely things about working with Arts Collaboratory, you didn't have to explain what you are trying to do, you might not succeed, but everybody knew why you were trying to do it.**

FARID RAKUN

Farid's account strongly reflects the trajectory of ruangrupa in a way that shows that ruangrupa's life is informed by the life of Arts Coll. With that, it can be interesting to try and disentangle Arts Coll. from ruangrupa, and thus indeed any history of AC must take into account the history of each individual member organisation. One of the more important contributions in his account is that "ruangrupa is not a membership collective." Which makes me immediately ask that if ruangrupa is not a membership collective, how might this reflect the membership policy of AC? Farid clarifies the formation of the Arts Schoolaboratory was at the Sao Paulo Biennial (2014), in which ruangrupa were participating artists. He also clarifies how this helped inspire or inform the Jakarta Biennial Academy during the Jakarta Biennial (2015), that included among others AC member Crater Invertido. Farid also clarifies the notion that the "ecosystem" or ekosistem requires "being part of something bigger". It is also described as "hanging out." It functions less as a law (as a mandate that brings together), and more as a way of being and doing.

[5] Tonika Sealy Thompson, academic, curator, arts activist, and Ambassador of Barbados to Brazil.
[6] Tonika Sealy Thompson, and Stefano Harney. "Ground provisions." Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry [45], no. [1] ([2018]): [120–125].

I. Yeah, the study buddy

Farid Rakun: Hm. Study in what understanding you mean?

Serubiri Moses: Well, I mean in many ways I should clarify that I am talking about an administrative term, that is being used in official documents[7] that people share in Arts Collaboratory, so it's not like a kind of abstract philosophical concept. People actually refer to it as something official, like a terminology in Arts Collaboratory. So it is a bit like a methodology, but at the same time it's more administrative. I don't know how to say, it's another protocol in the organisation.

Farid Rakun: **Yeah, the study buddy.** One of them. Well, for us, there are certain cases that have been useful, for example, we have Andan from us, Ruangrupa, who took part in one of the Banga by WAZA. And then other cases as well, that people can gang up together, and deepen their conversation - not necessarily the whole group, the whole network et cetera. Some even went to, for example, **I don't know if (she) called it study at that moment, but, for example, Koyo Kouoh, visited Ashkal Alwan, no?**

Serubiri Moses: Hmm.

Farid Rakun: **Before the Raw Academy started, and studied it through.** Of course not only. It is not only the moment that she studied something that turned out, or produced Raw Academy, but I think it played a big part as well. So that type of things happened in the past and keep on happening, under the pandemic maybe it is not that – the visits haven't been that feasible under the situation, but it still keeps on happening. So it has been useful, but for us Ruangrupa itself.

We used it once when some of us including myself were part of the Jakarta Biennial in 2015, and then **we had an open call for the ecosystem of the Arts Collaboratory network, to be part of it again. We called it academy as well, the Jakarta Biennial Academy in 2015.** And then not directly related but some of the younger members of the organisations in Arts Collaboratory came to Jakarta and then met each other, and all that.

We forced them to form **a collective of collective, a new collective.** We forced them to form a new collective. Because the success of it can be questionable. Well, you have to ask them actually - but we ourselves learned from the experience - it was good. So it was nice, in hindsight, to have that opportunity: there's no productivity burden that we can fail.

II. We call ourselves ekosistem

Serubiri Moses: Thank you, Farid. Okay, so now you are introducing a lot of different things, which I should ask you about as well, since you have brought them up. So the idea of academies, and education programs in general in relation to Arts Collaboratory, and you have also brought up of course the visits from place to place, and the other word you have brought up is ecosystem which I know is now a big word in cultural policy in Indonesia. Can you expand further? Whichever one you want to expand further.

Farid Rakun: I think the Ecosystem / ekosistem first, because we used it at least since 2016 at least in our (collective). **Like we call ourselves ekosistem, no?** First when we occupied the ex-warehouse space, and then right now when we became part of a collective called gudskul, which is an informal education platform, we used it. But anyway it is based on our understanding of an **ekosistem because we learn through the years that we've been operating that we have to play a part in a bigger system.** Maybe the ekosistem, the understanding of ekosistem might be not necessarily tested, like theoretically, et cetera. But we used it because we are only playing a part, so we're not the only one that drives the ekosistem, no? **And then it also refers to people around us, and outside of us on a daily basis. So it's not insular.** Gudskul for example, of course it was founded by ruangrupa. But then we realized that at least **ruangrupa is not a membership collective.**

[7] See section on Study in AC Future Plan [2014], and AC Future Plan Revised [2017]. Study includes: Self-study. Active study, collective study, study buddy. It is defined as "A kind of practice of spending time with each other, with our material, and with our work in unlearning/learning and looking to better understand what we do and our worlds."

That we were not based ourselves on members. It is kind of difficult to understand who is in Ruangrupa and who is not. It is easy when it is locked by a project, for example documenta is kind of easy, so it is nine of us, then ruangrupa is composed of more than the nine of us, you know?

Farid Rakun: Right. So even the people who came enjoy gudskul or took something out of gudskul, in a certain sense, not financially maybe, but like they hang out there. **They give an atmosphere of hanging out. They call them ekosistem as well.** Not necessarily artists, we don't care what we do in the art and cultural field, even. But there are there, the food sellers that we buy our food from on a daily basis, so they support us, while we are supporting them on a daily basis, we include them in our ekosistem. **Like the schools, the museums, the institutions, or like the ministry, we understand it as part of the ekosistem as well, but we understand it as part of the Indonesian art ekosistem, as you said.** So we understand it that way.

III. Which in the end got absorbed by Gudskul

Farid Rakun: On the academy, guskul itself, we learn a lot from our time in the Arts Collaboratory. First while we became guskul, if we trace back it's not this linear and neat. But if we trace back it is kind of clear– the traces. **We learn that as ruangrupa, we are interested in education of course for a long time. But to practice it – it is around 2013 when we talk about Institute Ruangrupa, which was born from a program in Arts Collaboratory called Arts Schoolaboratory.**

Serubiri Moses: When was that? When was Arts Schoolaboratory?

Farid Rakun: I think it is around the same time, like 2013, or 2014.

Because there was a meeting for Arts Schoolaboratory in the Sao Paulo Biennial. And that biennial we took part in 2014, so around that time. It didn't really. It was good, there was a good energy when we started to talk about (it in) Arts Coll. but then it didn't really pick up, not like the – what is the collaborative project that talks about borders?

Serubiri Moses: Which organisations?

Farid Rakun: It's multiple organisations, Mas Arte Mas Accion. And Platohedro. It is a big deal for them, so they play a big part in it. Curricularly, or something. It's called (INAUDIBLE). So I think it didn't pick up like (INAUDIBLE). **But even that gave us a lot of insights you know? And then sending that and then we initiated it with ruangrupa, which in the end got absorbed by Gudskul.**

So we kind of played through concepts et cetera; throwing concepts on the wall to see which one sticks, **and then it became Gudskul. And we realised that maybe the next iteration of ruangrupa would be absorbed by something a collective of collectives, and then take a form of informal educational platform and we realised it.** Of course not only Arts Collaboratory, but it played a big part in that journey.

MARIE HELENE PEREIRA

Marie Helene's account stresses what individuals are in relation to the whole.[8] As she suggests there are "individuals who have specific skills, who have specific visions, who have specific motivations, and who as a whole make the institution." This view emphasizes a more horizontal order rather than the vertical administration of corporate organisations. This move to the rhizomatic is influenced by AC's working documents and principles – such as those named in the Future Plan. The other aspect that is stressed is that of "transition". This comes to be significant, but an area little documented in Arts Coll. – outside of where it implies financial transition. On a whole, Marie Helene's account implies that transition is not merely about finding a new financial arrangement for the organisation, but it is also about the individuals who make up the organisation, such that "transition" implies holding space for "visions" / "motivations" of those who are no longer active in the organisation, or whom have departed.

[8] This view tends to remind me not of the modern individual of liberalism, who's vote and choice determine history, but rather of African epistemology and political thought which casts a more interconnected individual whose survival rests on the survival of others.

1. An institution surviving its founder

Marie Helene: Okay, let me start with talking about RAW and its vision. From its creation up until today, what was important was that RAW shouldn't be one more space. **It shouldn't be a new gallery, following the trend of what was perceived as an institution of contemporary art here in Senegal from the '60s onwards.**

Senegal through its capital Dakar was **already at that time one of the most dynamic contexts when it comes to contemporary art on the African continent. And of course, we know that's thanks to its first President, the poet and writer Leopold Sedar Senghor. He taught us a culture of building art institutions and supporting artistic production. He was the mastermind behind the creation of École de Dakar, Dakar Biennale, Les Manufactures de Thiès among other initiatives.**

There were a lot of artists who were trained under the Ecole de Dakar in the '60s, and who made great work that was shown in Dakar, but also other places. So having another art center just looking at production wouldn't make sense. The vision for the creation of RAW really was to intervene with a critical view on contemporary art, its production and the relationship between artists and society.

A more critical view of the way in which knowledge is embedded in artistic practice – not just on the production side of it and its aesthetics but also looking at its discourse as a whole, and really dedicating a space where that discourse would be criticised and be a basis for a conversation with art practitioners of different disciplines, but also with our publics.

Since the inception of RAW there was also **a clear idea for how important it is for the institution to survive its founder** – and since there's been endless efforts to train team members. Important **efforts of creating the conditions for transition to happen.**

Transition of directorship, not a transition of vision, but a space of expansion of the existing vision. That was very important, and I think it's what allowed RAW to stay alive even though Koyo (Kouoh), its founder, is not leading it as before. Doing this work on transmission for years before the actual transition was very important. That helped me a lot!

2. Removing hierarchical structures

In terms of leadership, I think that being in AC for me was very educative because **the ethical principles that we developed in AC**, that we learned in AC, were some that I really believe could change a lot when it comes to removing hierarchical structures in institutions, even though as you know one person has to take responsibility for a lot of things, for me it was important that even though we talk about RAW as a whole, **we also need to know that in within RAW there are individuals, who have specific skills, who have specific visions, who have specific motivation, and who as a whole make the institution, no?** And that is something that I think is very important. **Up until today, I have been really trying hard to show the individuals in the institution, because it is really important. And that is something I learned very much from AC.** And of course having multiple conversations with people who are not necessarily in AC, but still are aligned with the way in which we thought about AC as an institution, was very helpful for me.

It doesn't mean that it makes things easier though because you have a lot of points in which you just have to decide and move forward, and I think that's going to be the case in all institutions, somehow. **But I think it is important to empower whoever is working in the institution.**

Appendix 2

An AC Folk/Tale Poem

Translation project by Jumana Emil Abboud

Reading AC as a culture, and as such, with its practice, its history and its languages, values, tools and experiences that invite the possibility of translating it as a mythical story. This work represents the tale of Arts Collaboratory. It is an artwork, and not documentative, it is part true and part imagined.

Jumana Emil Aboud uses drawing, video, performance, objects and text to navigate themes of memory, loss and resilience. Her interests lie in attempting to pose questions related to memory as read through the body, through home and homeland, through cultural ritual or practice and through folklore and folktales and other storytelling practices; especially as associated with icons and archetypes, as well as in language, both as a visual and textual tool, and the reading and re-reading of it. The artist's work consistently reflects a Palestinian cultural landscape in which the struggle for continuity amid the wider political context necessitates a constant process of metamorphosis and ingenuity. She lives and works in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER 1: in which there is a mountain and we must move it.

Listen to the audio **HERE**

You might say they had one mission and the mission was to move a mountain. You might say the mountain was figurative, but still, how did such a mountain, so colossal, arrive to the place it arrived – how did it get there? Perhaps it was the doing of a mischievous spirit who with the blink of an eye and a snap of a finger could do such things play with mountains and trees and re-arrange them as he pleased. Or I might tell you the version of the story which entails a laborious and carefully planned out hundred-year-old process of moving the Mountain at the hands of greedy man. Or, you might believe that it was the mountain itself who decided to move itself. What will you choose to believe?

So let us begin.
I am sitting alongside *Be Devoted, Be sacrifice, Love Passionately (Fida)*
I have never told her this, I am never her, I so admire her graceful stride. She is not a deer, no. That would be Spear; I'll tell you about her shortly, for she too I do admire.
I tell stories that disguise my vulnerabilities rather than confronting the demons directly in the face. I only wish I could be as they are. I am learning.
And much of the learning is greatly owed to you, my family of collaborators, diverse, ageless, unbreakable.

To you my story listening believers and dis-believers, I will share a minute life from an expansive lifeline, pulsating in eternal drum. How can I imagine to tell you the story of something so magically and sustainably loaded intricate caring supportive inspirational and what little time there is with us now together here? We are here together, no? Imagine this with me - the story of a family of stars among us - across our expansive earth.

One upon a time, one of Heaven's Mountains ran away, and found itself - almost magically – placed in front of so and so's home, blocking the light of the sun.

What came first, the house or the mountain?
We do not know.
But we do know there was a mountain and obstructed the light from penetrating through. And this is not so much the story of the mountain in itself, or the so-called mischievous spirit who took advantage of the mountain's escape, and entrapped it right in the front yard of my home or the backyard of yours. No, this is more the story of the community of collaborators devotedly, curiously, tirelessly, enchantingly, would contrive to move the mountain. Not through harm but through nurture, care, time and collaboratory vision.

It is no secret that this is not simply one mountain. Each one of us, regardless of our geography, has crossed such mountains, haven't we?

We all have such a mountain blocking our light.
Sometimes, it's been there for so long, that we discontinue seeing-breathing it.

And so, this family of stars amongst us, the species-diverse, multi-lingual, eclipsed, they came together and plotted.
And I, I was among them, and this is where I share the story.
I am sitting with *Be Devoted, Be sacrifice, Love Passionately.*

Here we are now.
The journey begins.
It's a bus ride, an accidental 12-hour route that might have changed lives and loves.
Not 12, 21.
We stop counting after five – not the hour, but the extent.

It was a smuggling operation – and we, all 40 or 400 of us, were being smuggled. It was like an enchantment of sorts, and it hadn't been in the schooled programme. Not in the schedule either. Ours was the mission of meeting for the first time to plot alongside, in contradiction to obstructing mountainous realities.
We were told that social innovation was the remedy.
And here we are, talking about it even now, today, after 100 years.

Once upon a time of twenty-five multiple times, a small and humble community living on various outskirts of many towns, not too far from here.
They were guided by Spear, her name – as in spear of strength. As in the arrow that flew beyond the fence and into the woods. I will not lie. When I say her name, my eyes get tearful, to imagine the mere strength of her willingness, her vision and her faith.
They, that is you, imagine this is you. Remember this story I share with you now.

There she was,
Spear, that's her name,
many may call her by other names, her earth name or heart name or name of song; but for the purpose of our tale here, I will call her by her spirit name. Spear of strength.
She plays a large part in our story, a much-valued drop in the Collaboratory ocean.

She calculated the move and worked together with her inner circle to magnify the circle of imaginaries/visionaries.

(It may not matter so much where she Spear came from – although it does, because it's our histories – herstories - that pull us back a little bit and shoot us into unfolding futures).
How did you arrive here, where you are now?
You mean on the ephemeral bus journey?
Yes.
Well, not too far or too close to a lake, the Lake that Feeds All, Issky-al-Kul – that's how I remember the name, and from my slow-hearing human ears. The Lake that Feeds All is in the territory of Heaven's mountains.

Is it here? Is this where the runaway mountain used to live?
Yes, I reply.

There are 4,000 different plant natives, and over 1000 you will not find anywhere.
Indigenous, some of us. And some, so close to extinction. And, maybe, depending on when you're hearing this – all of us. In parts?
Yes, maybe. A language, a custom. Now only talked about on bus routes floating through space.

In the land that is like a braid that is braided, a woven fence, chinampa.
Along the green braids and woven fences, in a place where dissemination is a matter of life and death.
They organize their best strategy; they call upon their bravest of heroes. One cannot say its name. I shall spell it out:
B A N G A

This hero, a he, a she, a they, them.
They joined together in and with B A N G A
They shared stories
B A N G A brought a mirror to the gathering and helped them to see their diversity, and commonality
Other objects, talismans, were brought; such as a piece of ceramic tile, a goat, an herb, a stone.
Eat from this, hand-grown chilli's. It is told we may need it to break the spell.

What spell?
The spell of re-me-me-mebering.

The storytellers begin to speak, these birds.
Reflections on ideas
How to administer the chaos (of escaping mountains and…)?

They began to speak to the earth.
The earth?
Yes, the trees, chilli peppers, star fruits - Carambola - passion fruits, Guanabana, Rambutan, cherries, almonds.
They began to speak to the earth and to ask her
How can we move this mountain?

Where are you? We are on the bus route, remember?
And we are standing on sacred ancestral land.
Chinampa. This is not a lie.
Chinampas are human-made ecosystems where mountains, water, wildlife, crops and humans coexist symbiotically.
Chinampas are human-made and other-than-human inhabited.
And what is your mountain? What form does it take?

What was his answer?
He said, we live on the outskirts of time, we braid the earth's grasses and weave green fences, to resist drying out time,
Drying out time
Drying out.
They do not keep the monsters away.
Which monsters?
Out here we are surrounded, from this direction by the ZODES and from that one by them, the thieving loggers – the grabbing kind.
She said.

They begin with what is shared among them.
Our cosmovision.
They share without blurring.

They share with the curiosity of youth and the wisdom of Sage.
Sage, that is purifier, mystic, to cure the burning of your heart.
Burn sage and keep the monstrous grabbers away.
Sage, that is both shield and sword.
They recollected and cultivated local seeds.
This is how we reflect on territory, politics, diversity, ecology, sustainability -
The relational or re-rational interdependency.
We recollect and cultivate local seeds.

And another bird (of time) said:
Chinampas are artificial lands created some 900 years ago
And another bird of time said Al-Manatir are cylindrical dry-stone huts created some 9000 years ago. Round retained organic – located in urban and rural fringes on hill-slopes among fig and olive trees and pastures – inside, we hid our harvests.
Rimbawan, Rimbawan, What will become of your 17000 islands and salt-water forests? A one-hundred decade labour of love.
Our soil is rich, incomparable. With my hands I have plucked your leaves of tea.
And I sang my song of attachment from this place to that; between the bat-covered trees and the hitch-hiking monkeys, the family of stars gathered.

We braided the earth's grasses,
We embody the voice of the other,
I am looking for myself in the diversity of narratives.
How does the world look from here?
What appears now in our dreams?
re-read, our words underlined as we speak them,
We listen and you respond,

What are you doing?
We are writing a collective script.

It is a weaving process.
Colours, languages, territories.

Look, do you see what is happening when you listen?
Your listen-being is woven into this as well.
Look, can you see its colour?

During this process, we get to work, we leave the mirror and other objects behind, safely and gratefully.
We return to the earth and work with it. Him. Her. They. Them.
Today, we are golden. And we hold a star at our womb.
Today, our colour is Maroon.

Our colour is maroon, it brings out the light in our promising eyes.
We are golden, like the collaboratory intricacies of light (that we are).

We are all pretty much the same age too, aren't we?
I speak to trees
You speak to waters
I am here inside the story And I speak to you from where I am.

What is your agricultural identity, your stone identity, my spirit identity?
How do I live my story, and how do I live in yours?

Look, let us return to this mountain, and the ZODES,
What ever became of their gathering local seeds?

Yes, we got to work. We planted without machines and their noise, we planted without weapons.
Weapons?
You know, chemicals.
What about imagination?
Imagination?
Yes. It is your best defence.
They imagined without houses of green. Did you know they destroy origins?
Yes, architectural origins of the chinampa,
Undervaluing chinampería in their imaginary

What's more, the stars of this earth, leaving the mirrors behind, picked up other tools – tools to restore the aquifer of nations.
They even invented a name: AoN
Aquifer of nations
Astronomy of Nouns

It's amazing. They realized they didn't really need much to create, to produce.
They needed each other?
Yes.

What else did you restore?
We restored the runaway mountain back to its territory of Heaven's mountains.
Do you mean that the monster just vanished?
Yes.
They held up a mirror.

They changed their eating habits.

We began by changing the habits of our children.
We started simple, some of us growing from our windows, no?
Yes.

And here's a recipe: the secret ingredient: recall your ancestors (of all human and non-human manner), gather, and work together;
Tequio (take-way-o) is collective work for mutual aid
I don't think you've pronounced that correctly.
Take-ee-yo

Did you know this plant is sacred? What does it do? It has the power to grant immortality, and the seeds cure infertility. Feed the earth. Feed their minds.
And whether it is used for flavouring or for meat preservation; as a blood-sugar regulator, or inside love potions…
Say its name: Cilantro

CHAPTER 2: The Upside-down, or, A spoiled father (baba ghanoush) and we cook together.

Listen to the audio **HERE**

One cauliflower (break into medium-sized pieces)
Or, the aubergine/eggplant alternative, Take two medium-sized eggplants
1 large onion, chopped
3-5 whole garlic teeth, peeled
2 cups rice
3 ½ cups veggie broth
Salt, pepper, all spice to taste
Turmeric (optional and ethically sources)
Pine nuts and sliced peeled almonds, roasted (about 1 Tbs each)
Olive oil (support Palestinian farmers)

Sprinkle the cauliflower pieces with salt and a cover with a dash of olive oil. Heat in the oven for 30-45 minutes or until slightly tender-crisp. Alternatively, you may wish to deep fry them until golden brown and drain the fried vegetable on an absorbent cloth.

While the florets are baking in the oven, you will want to rinse your rice and keep it in a bowl of cold water for 20 minutes. And when they're ready, you can drain the rice, mix in the spices and a dash of olive oil, stir together inside the bowl.
So you want to basically prepare the cauliflower in advance, and let the rice bathe in the cold water 20 minutes before you start cooking.
Fry the onions (you will be using the same pot that you want to add the baked cauliflower and rice to), add the peeled garlic cloves. Some crush the garlic, but we prefer to keep it whole.
Add the cauliflower to the bottom and immediately add the rice. Pour your veggie broth slowly and preferably only from the edge of the pot and not over the middle. Don't stir! Cover the pot and bring your broth to a boil. Reduce the heat, keep your pot covered and do not stir! Leave to cook all together for 30-45 minutes. Do not stir!

If you want to add more vegetables, such as carrots, it's also delicious. The carrots may require more time to cook, you can always leave them chopped in a bowl of cold water for an hour to help them tenderize. Honoring.

Turn the pot upside down in a large platter or flat plate. Cool off slightly, pat the side of the pot pat the pot on all sides, go ahead, pat it gently, no not too gently. Now lift the pot. And what you will have is your Maklouba dish, the rich and veggies sculpted shaped like the pot they were cooked in, with the cauliflower – or the vegetables you cooked – sitting at the top.
Garnish with roasted pine nuts and almonds, and serve enjoy!
Serve with tangy salad of finely chopped tomatoes and/your favorite yogurt, mine is the tangy type! This will serve about 4-6 individuals.

The upside-down will make you sleepy. You may wish to lift your feet up and take a short nap. Why not, you deserve it. While slumbering into a light sleep, you may dream of Heaven's Mountains. Remember them?
There is story about how one of the mountains ran away and found itself - almost magically – placed in front of so and so's home, blocking the light of the sun and the shimmer of stars.

CHAPTER 3: In this chapter, that we may or may not refer to as Chapter III.

Listen to the audio **HERE**

In this chapter, that we may or may not refer to as Chapter III: this chapter, In which tea is sacred, and so too is the water that makes it, the route it takes to find my your their company - and for this, a commemorative consumption

This chapter, in which we understand that challenges are in fact dares / how would we have known if we did not try?
Is it like the proverb: If you build it, they will come,
Yes perhaps.

We are here now. It is, or it is not, the start of this story here but the end of another – remember?

This story in the telling now, is the same shifting tale that is also in the making elsewhere; and here now.

Once upon a time of times
We go grazing and we eat from the soil. It tastes like cilantro.
You mean it does not taste like anything you have ever tasted?
Indeed. It's not that same feeling. We were once students and now we are teaching others who are as we once were, students.
Aren't we always?
Yes perhaps.
Discovering our new skills, what would you choose to do> pass them onto others? Or hide them?
We find comfort and safety, regardless of the ambiguous or numbered futures.
What are you safe from?
From words.

Ask me about words. I can or I cannot speak them.
Can you tell me more about the intervention of words?
Yes, and maybe later, I will tell you about the intervention of worlds
With words we play. We play with dictionary meanings and revisit the word value or the value of word-deed.
Affinity / Care / Self-care / decentralization / ‘Oneh (solidarity) /

We arrived. It was a journey by bus and through worlds.
Have we arrived? I feel as if I am still moving.
You are. And you do.
Move and make movement.
I forgot to tell you, let’s return a little bit to the tale, another tale I might have shared with you once;
Spear was no ordinary woman. She could, at her own free will, transform from human to animal form. She was a deer, resembling the Siberian Roe Deer. And indeed, among her favourite runaway spots to roam was in – no, actually, I will not tell you her favourite. I won’t reveal our secret.

Her friend, approaches, he is the King and all he seeks is true freedom. In fact, that is his name: *The One who Seeks Freedom Along the Shore*. *Freedom seeker* is driven by loyalty.
We are joined by the princess also, and by many. It will be a true feast indeed.
Freedom-Seeker-along- the-shore prepares tea for us. We wait. It is a patient ritual, and we honour the silences between us – we honour the watching, the brewing and the pouring. He travels us back in time, and I can see his their our fathers and mothers. One tea ceremony, is that all it takes?

It takes, yes. And it gives.
It gives and it takes, and it lifts the veil bounding time and geography.
Yes, indeed.
We are sitting under the star, and it is waving as the wind wills.
You do not have this experience every day.
Some of us may take part in this experience once every three hundred and sixty-five days, and that is all.
Is that enough?
What is enough?
Affinity / Care / Self-care / decentralization / ‘Oneh (solidarity) /
Trust
Radical imagination.
They are with us too, here, drinking tea
We are not the only ones writing this story you see.
Do you see?

It’s very distinctive. Yes.

At that very moment Nina steps in.

Distinct your identity, Nina says.
There are many ways to play this game, she continued. We can build a tri-fold structure, or observe, or cohabit in the house of the commons.
Who is she referring to? A person or an institution?
An institution which, when perceived as a living organism, and not necessarily of human origin, can or may be able to care for the community of its local ecosystem.
Ah, I see. Does that answer your question? Yes.

We must publish our words – ostraca – our words count – counting our words –
Breathe in breathe out Circulation is good.

In her own words: as a living organism Nina changes, feels, thinks and senses

Don’t think too much, I tell her.
Come with me. We are going to a festival.
The festival of imaginaries
Memories …… that are attached to our sustaining lives and lives ever-evolving
The festival of visibility
Walk with me
They are hosting with care, this gathering.
Don’t walk in that direction, those stalls are impersonating life in the form of art,
And at a very high price too,
Indeed, the price of gold.

In my mind, I am asking
Where are they? The boundaries between forms of life and forms of art?

It is as if you can hear my thoughts,
For in one moment, you begin to speak about imagining that one form is responsible for the other.

And in another moment, you speak of the price of gold.

The price of gold,
Yes, gold mining and its poisons.
You are speaking in your mother tongue, and in a stream-of-conscious-being
I don’t know the language very well, yet some words I can pick up;
“Mine-owners. Armed hands. They are so young,
A woman at ten years of age.
They are not the same communities.”

After this experience, M & L bring a two-plated stove to work, another colleague brings a pan, a cooking pot, another, spices. A hand-carved wooden spoon is used. The tools are all set.
We organize a breakfast to share our stories with our community.
Scrambled eggs are enjoyed over work breakfast and a two-hour morning of discussions and storytelling.
Did you know that breakfasts have become part of our daily work ritual?
Yes, I imagine that is where you do your best brainstorming- interconnecting.
Sometimes the traffic noise from the nearby street, eternally known as 'the road to J', sometimes, the noise is heard but not for long and never to deter us from our storytelling, story-storming.

What is that?
Instead of brainstorming. We are weathering stories together; so, story-storming
What is hard for us to talk about?
How do we embrace our limitations?
Dependency and vulnerability

These storms, they don't divide us, like the other ones do, the illegal, unjustifiable, persecuting raids. Altering our breathing, our rain water access.
Breathe deep she tells me, I know what you are referring to.
Return to the other story-storms. That's what brought you here, isn't it?
I feel my body relaxing and my face smiling, thinking about you, my dearest friends, story-makers. I smile when I think of you (and you) asking:
What happens to palm trees in the storm?

These tall royal rooted trees, we look to them and we learn.
Yes, you mentioned earlier, student teachers.
Underneath this particular palm tree; yes, this one; it is told a treasure a buried.
What kind of treasure?

I will tell you shortly.
Did I ever tell you about the time, once upon a time, when this community of collaboratories,
The same tea *ceremoning, sensitiving* watchful learners, collected their common-commons into one pot or two and began to cook up a stew? conceived of collective stew-entity, made with the finest of collective rights: because when you realize that you have shared dreams, you will work with those who share with you and you will generate a circulatory process of being; there will be enough stew for everyone. And you , we, us, she, he I, You. You will learn to trust again and to create in defense of monsters in that and this direction.

Which monster?
Mercury. That's his name. He lives in our water. He lives in yours.

Look, listen, I'm going to give you an example:

The festival of imaginaries we just visited not so long ago in our telling here and now, in that festival, we met men and women who are now practicing artisanal fishing practices. They are the guardians of the forests and its rivers. They've created planning tools for the protection and defence of monsters; and for the permanence of their communities. Yes, it's possible!
They have become part of a larger biosphere reserve that is now recognized.
And now it's your turn, do you recognize what you need to do?
What can you acknowledge in the here and now that has been or is being covered up?
Poisoned?

I should warn you though, in your search to be or to become part of the new and transformative, you may lose old friends.
Is this part of the transformation?
I suppose.

Now, let's return to the box, the treasure under the tree.
When the storm passes you may choose to collect it, open it.
The key is hidden in the electricity box or in the fridge. You will find what has been hiding, and you will lock it behind you, returning the key to the hiding place.

Inside you will find a story in the future. And you are there, whistling in the grasses, talking among your friends and listening to one another. Listening to yourself. Your inner community.

Inside this story in the future, you find yourself. There are, or there are not, parts of you, your culture your heritage that is timeless. It is talked about in futures to come. In futures where they talk of collaboratory, and radical imaginatorium, they talk of you.
Just listen. Here we are talking now.

I welcome you in my future and you invite me to yours.
Inside the box, there is a story from the future.
It tells of a community of stars upon this earth that met with risks and challenges in order to create bridges braids chinampas and more.

The story speaks:

Listen: the palm tree,
Some say the palm tree was in fact a boy; a spoiled boy, uncaring towards life or forms of life around him. He wanted to be more, more of the same, and somehow managed to convince a wise magician to gift him a magic lantern that he was asked never to open until after he had reached so and so's country across the seas, and in reaching this place, he would have to watch the sun set from across the seas , watching towards his home country. the sun had set – yet the boy who did not listen to the wise one's instructions, upon opening the pot, unleashed a curse transforming him into a tree of palm.
Some say they saw a Deer there, trotting and galloping ever so enchantingly. She witnessed it all.

If you chased her, him, they, them; you may or you may not hear the rest of the tale of the boy who transformed into a tree.

I will tell you what I know.

I know that the palm tree grew not too far from here, the coast. And it was there that fishermen went fishing with their songs, nets and hopes.
They told stories as they waited, floating in their hand-made boats, upon the sea. These were hard times, and fish was rare to find or poisoned by mercury.
They spoke of tales about a spider who wanted all the stories to be about him and him alone. The spider approached the divine Creator,
Do you know this story? The condition was that the spider bring three things: a jar full of live bees; a boa constrictor, and a tiger. Spider was able to fool the Bees into the jar, he would set out to ensure the safety of their population. He fooled the boa constrictor by teaching her to stick dance. I will tell you about that later. The creator was truly impressed.
What about the tiger? The spider was wise in his fooling of the tiger. Spider spun his her their our web of creations across the tiger's eyes, and the mighty tiger was helpless, now guided by the spider and her his their our creations. Tiger and spider are seen walking side by side;
The web eventually fell off his eyes. The tiger. He got accustomed to thinking-seeing only through innovative creations – it was as delicate as the breeze in Medellin.

They speak of such stories for their moral teachings. For their connectedness. Their courage to face the challenges in whatever shape or form they may – and do - take.

As they – the community of fishermen and women - as they were telling the tales, one fisherman caught one fish, and she was a magic fish granting as many wishes as the poor fisherman desired, as long as he returned her into the waters.
And do you know what he wished for?
He wished for nothing. He had no desire to make any wishes
and so
He released the magical fish back into the waters.
Charmed and thankful for setting her free, she made him a promise. She promised that the offer for wish-fulfilment would always remain open, should he ever change his mind.
Did he ever change his mind?
Yes perhaps, but this is another story.
What would you wish for if ever you were faced with such a near-setting-a-magic-fish-free opportunity?

Nina, are you still here?
Who is Nina?
Nina was the name of a good-hearted bird, whose favourite garment to wear was a green Batik, with circles and lines and spirals – some zig zags too - and diamonds.
The bird flies from you to me, circulating tales from river to sea.

Listen,
The bird may speak of the children of Gudskul, friend to Bakudapan.
Who or what are they?
They are one thread woven into a textile patchworked collaborative demise
And this textile
It will warm you
It is transparent
Yet it will surprise you
And it does.
It does not fade away,
Not the textile or its impression upon your my their our lifeline.
It is made by a hundred hands across multiple times and sitting upon hundreds of laps of generosity.
It will inspire you to bring your thread,
and weave
Has it already?

Listen, we are here now in the future
Some of us took a Kombi (calm-be) to arrive
Not a combination vehicle, but a combination of vehicles.
Yes, stories as mediums.
Our stories brought us them her him you me here.

This is my story I've told it, and in your hands now I leave it.
Be like a bird and share its song.
In circulating the story there can be no wrong.

Appendix 3

Collective Practices, a Sonic Essay

Translation project by Kabelo Malatsie
(in collaboration with Robert Machiri)

A sonic essay on collaborative practices inspired by AC, the inability to translate or the refusal to use language that is conclusive, a language that is documentary in nature, a language that leads to canonized knowledge and the economy of visibility.

Kabelo Malatsie is a curator and organiser living in Bern. She recently became director of Kunsthalle Bern (April 2022). Her ongoing curatorial research project explores the exhibitionary mode as unlikely starting points that place incongruous practices together, to instigate other ways of making and reading the world we inhabit. As an organiser she is preoccupied with the notion of autonomy and the underground. She was director of Visual Arts Network of South Africa (2018-2019) and an associate in the curatorial team at Stevenson gallery in Cape Town and Johannesburg (2011 – 2016). She co-curated the exhibition Deliberation on Discursive Justice for the Yokohama Triennale (Japan 2020), participated In the Open or in Stealth for Barcelona's MACBA (Spain 2018), and curated solo exhibitions across various institutions in South Africa for artists such as Nicholas Hlobo, Moshekwa Langa and Sabelo Mlangeni. Malatsie holds a Master's degree in Art History from the University of Witwatersrand.

Robert Machiri, also known as Chi, is a Zimbabwean multidisciplinary artist and curator. His project, Pungwe Nights, is a participatory public platform which hosts African music with related contemporary arts. Listening at Pungwe Nights explores the relationship between the sound of language and the language of sound. Collaborating on the project, Machiri and Biwa reimagine the dialectic relationship between recording, translation and the recyclability of transnational phonographic cultures. The overall composition of the work gathers its form through experiential performance, as a live remix at a pungwe, or wake, and as an unbounded sonic exploration of khoekhoegowaborature and mbira tongues.

Listen to the **Sonic Essay** **HERE**

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